

1 14-21 - INFORMATION & SCOPING MEETING - GRAND RAPIDS

2 JULY 24, 2014 - 11:00 A.M.

3 FOR THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION,

4 MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE,

5 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

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8 In the Matter of the Application of Minnesota Power for a
9 Route Permit for the Great Northern High-Voltage
10 Transmission Line Project from Manitoba, Canada -
Minnesota Border to the Blackberry Substation near Grand
Rapids, Minnesota

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PUC DOCKET NO. E-015/TL-14-21

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Sawmill Inn
2301 Pokegama Avenue South
Grand Rapids, Minnesota

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July 24, 2014

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COURT REPORTER: Janet Shaddix Elling, RPR

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1 MS. TRACY SMETANA: Well, again, good
2 morning and welcome, everyone.

3 My name is Tracy Smetana, I'm the public
4 advisor with the Minnesota Public Utilities
5 Commission.

6 And we're here for the public information
7 and scoping meeting for the Great Northern
8 Transmission Line Project that Minnesota Power has
9 proposed.

10 I've included on this opening slide the
11 Public Utilities Commission docket number. That's
12 sort of the key to finding information with our
13 office. So if you're communicating with us or
14 looking for information, that's the number that you
15 want to remember.

16 So what we're going to talk about this
17 morning. First off, we're going to talk about the
18 route permit roles and process. And I will be
19 speaking to that as well as the U.S. Department of
20 Energy. We're going to ask Minnesota Power to
21 provide a brief description of the project. And
22 then the environmental review piece will be handled
23 by the Department of Commerce and, again, the U.S.
24 Department of Energy. And, of course, the main
25 event for today is your comments and questions.

1 Just briefly, who is the Public Utilities
2 Commission. We are a state agency and we're charged
3 with regulating various aspects of the utility
4 industry, including the permitting for transmission
5 lines.

6 We have five commissioners appointed by
7 the governor. They serve staggered terms and it's a
8 full-time job for those folks. So different from,
9 say, a small-town city council, where, you know,
10 they might have a few meetings a month, these are
11 folks that come into the office every day, Monday
12 through Friday. And we also have about 50 staff.

13 A little bit more about who's who in this
14 route permit process that the Public Utilities
15 Commission oversees.

16 First off, we have the applicant. That's
17 what we call the company asking for the route
18 permit. So in this case that's Minnesota Power.

19 The Department of Commerce, Energy
20 Environmental Review and Analysis, which you might
21 see abbreviated as EERA. They're another state
22 agency and their job is to conduct the environmental
23 review, and you'll hear lots of details about that a
24 little bit later.

25 Later on in this process we will ask an

1 administrative law judge from the Office of
2 Administrative Hearings to get involved to help us
3 do some fact-finding, make sure we have all the
4 facts in the record. The judge will come back out
5 here and hold public hearings probably in the spring
6 of next year. And then once the record is complete,
7 the judge will provide a summary of all the facts in
8 the record for the Public Utilities Commission and
9 make recommendations about this project.

10 We also have the U.S. Department of
11 Energy. And their responsibility is to do the
12 environmental review when a presidential permit
13 application is submitted.

14 And then with the Public Utilities
15 Commission, again, you might see that abbreviated as
16 PUC, there are a couple different staff members that
17 you might interact with throughout this project.
18 The first is our energy facilities planner, that
19 person deals more on the technical aspects of the
20 project, assists in building the record, advises the
21 Commissioners on impacts of various options that
22 exist.

23 And then the other is the public advisor,
24 that's me. And my job is to work with citizens to
25 help you figure out when do you plug into the

1 process, when can you submit comments, when are the
2 meetings going on, how does the process work. In
3 either case, the Commission staff, we're not giving
4 you legal advice, we're not advocating for one
5 position or another. Our job is to just provide the
6 facts and provide information so that you can choose
7 where you need to go with that.

8 So why is the Public Utilities Commission
9 involved in this particular project? Well, the
10 statutes and rules define it as a high voltage
11 transmission line. And that means they need a route
12 permit before they can build this project from the
13 Public Utilities Commission. And I've included
14 information here on the statutes and rules, so if
15 you're looking for some really interesting bedtime
16 reading, this would be a good place to go.

17 Now, the other piece of this project is
18 what we call a certificate of need. And that's
19 going to answer the question is this project needed.
20 And, again, because of the size of this project, the
21 state requires a certificate of need from the Public
22 Utilities Commission as well. So two different
23 approvals that the company needs from the Public
24 Utilities Commission before this project can go in
25 the ground. The first is certificate of need, is

1 the project needed. The second is the route permit.
2 If it's needed, where is it going to go.

3 The certificate of need is being handled
4 in a separate process. Some of you may have been
5 out when we were here in February talking about
6 certificate of need questions. That project -- or
7 that process is still in the works, no decision has
8 been made yet.

9 So how does the Public Utilities
10 Commission decide on the route? Well, there's a
11 variety of factors that are identified in the
12 statutes and rules. And I'm not going to read
13 through all of them because I'm assuming most of you
14 picked up the slides on your way in, but you can see
15 there's a pretty comprehensive list of the various
16 factors.

17 Now, what happens is the statutes and
18 rules don't tell us which things are most important.
19 So you might think human settlement is most
20 important, your neighbor might think tourism is most
21 important, and so what's going to happen throughout
22 the process is folks are going to discuss and
23 debate, you know, sort of the ranking or the
24 weighting of these various factors through the
25 process. And ultimately it's up to the Public

1 Utilities Commission to make a decision on where the
2 route would go.

3 So if indeed a route permit is granted in
4 this case, there's some various terms that you might
5 see or hear that you might want to know about.

6 The first is what we call the permitted
7 route. And that's sort of the wide area that the
8 company would have authority to build the line in.
9 So it's just the location kind of from point A to
10 point B. And the width is going to vary along that
11 route. It can go up to 1.25 miles, so a pretty good
12 section of land. When we get smaller within that
13 permitted route area, we get to what we call the
14 right-of-way, and that's the land that's actually
15 needed to build and maintain the line. And then we
16 get smaller yet to what we call the anticipated
17 alignment and that's where the company expects the
18 line will actually go within that right-of-way.

19 If a route permit is issued, obviously
20 the company needs a place to build it, right, and so
21 there is various ways that the company will acquire
22 land to do that. The first is an easement that
23 would be negotiated between the applicant, Minnesota
24 Power, and the landowner. In this particular case,
25 state law also allows the company to go through the

1 eminent domain process if that negotiation fails.
2 And there is a court process that deals with that.
3 And, again, I'm not giving you legal advice, just
4 throwing out these terms so that you have
5 information on where to go next. And that is also
6 referenced in the statutes there.

7 There is another statute that is referred
8 to as the Buy the Farm statute. In some cases the
9 landowner may require the company to purchase the
10 land. And there's a handout in the back that you
11 may have picked up on the way in that talks in
12 greater detail about all of these aspects. If you
13 have questions about that, I would definitely
14 recommend you pick that up and read through that.

15 So here's a little chart that shows sort
16 of a high level of what the process looks like.
17 This is a similar process to what that certificate
18 of need will be going through, it's just on a
19 different schedule, if you will. And so you can see
20 we're at box number 2 right here, the public
21 information and scoping meetings. And so there's a
22 number of steps that have to occur before we get
23 down to the end of a decision on this route permit.
24 And there are a number of opportunities along the
25 way for you to become involved.

1 As I mentioned earlier, there will be
2 public hearings back out here in the spring with an
3 administrative law judge, there's also various other
4 opportunities for you to submit written comments and
5 so forth throughout the process.

6 If you like a list better than a picture,
7 this is your slide. It gives essentially the same
8 information as the previous one, only in a list
9 form, and with some estimated timelines. And the
10 key word here is estimated. This is likely to
11 change, probably more than once as we go through the
12 process. For a project this large and complex,
13 things will come up along the way that may cause
14 changes to this timeline. But you can see again
15 right now, we're in July 2014 for the information
16 and scoping meetings, and we're anticipating a
17 Public Utilities Commission decision in October of
18 2015. So we've got a ways to go and a lot of steps
19 to complete between now and then.

20 So, as I mentioned, one of the ways that
21 folks can weigh in is by submitting written comments
22 to our office. And when we're accepting comments on
23 various topics throughout this process, we will
24 issue a notice to tell you, hey, what's going on,
25 what questions are we looking for answers to right

1 now. And so I just wanted to -- this is an old one,
2 as you can see, from back in April, but I just
3 wanted to use it as an example to show you sort of
4 the key elements you want to pick out if you receive
5 one of these notices in the mail.

6 So first off is the docket number.
7 Again, that's the key to everything in our office so
8 it's always helpful to have that information handy.
9 The comment period. So it's not just an open-ended
10 where we're looking for answers to these questions
11 for ever and ever and ever, we have a deadline,
12 'cause we need to keep moving through those steps
13 that were on the previous slide. So you want to pay
14 attention to those deadlines because if it comes in
15 after the deadline we can't use it anymore because
16 we're already moving on to the next thing.

17 The other thing to pay attention to is
18 the topics open for comment. Now, on the notice
19 that you received in the mail or that you may have
20 seen in the newspaper, there was a list of topics
21 that we were looking for answers to for this
22 meeting. Back in April and May we were looking for
23 answers to different questions. So if someone
24 submits answers to these questions today, it's
25 really not useful because we've already made

1 decisions about that and we've moved on.

2 Now, if you're looking for more
3 information after today's meeting, there's a variety
4 of ways that you can do that. We do have what we
5 call an eDocket system, it's the official record
6 where we keep everything that comes in in this case.
7 So Minnesota Power's application for this route
8 permit is included here, any comments that you
9 submit will be included here, and you can just
10 follow these steps and look at these documents right
11 online.

12 We also have a project mailing list where
13 you can ask to receive information either by U.S.
14 mail or by e-mail to let you know when opportunities
15 to participate are coming up. So you would receive
16 notices about things like future meetings, comment
17 periods, when the environmental document is
18 available, and so forth. You can complete one of
19 the orange cards in the back to sign up for that
20 today, or if you forget to do it today and you
21 decide later you'd like to, you can contact our
22 office to take care of that.

23 Now, if you say, hmm, getting information
24 about the meetings and comment period sounds great,
25 but there's a lot of other information out there,

1 and I think I might want to hear even more. We have
2 an e-mail subscription service where you can
3 subscribe to receive a notice every time something
4 new comes in. So if you're an e-mail person, this
5 is a good idea. If you don't like e-mail that much,
6 this is probably not a good choice for you because
7 you could end up getting a lot of e-mail. The
8 instructions are here and you can just follow those
9 to get on that subscription list.

10 This is just a picture of what that
11 screen looks when you go to subscribe. A lot of
12 people say it's not very user-friendly, so I always
13 like to give you a picture so you can see exactly
14 what you're supposed to enter in all of those
15 different places and then you'll go ahead and start
16 receiving those e-mails.

17 Again, at the PUC, the Public Utilities
18 Commission, there's two different folks that you
19 might interact with as part of the process. The
20 first is me, again, my name is Tracy Smetana, I'm
21 the public advisor. We also have our energy
22 facilities planner, Michael Kaluzniak, and he is
23 here in the back of the room. So if you have
24 questions for either of us we'll definitely be
25 around after sort of the presentation part of the

1 meeting is completed.

2 And with that I'm going to turn it over
3 to Julie Ann Smith with the Department of Energy.

4 DR. JULIE ANN SMITH: Hello and good
5 morning.

6 My name is Julie Ann Smith and I work for
7 the United States Department of Energy. I'm with
8 the Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy
9 Reliability.

10 I would like to thank you all very much
11 for taking time out of your busy schedules to attend
12 this meeting today. Your presence and input are
13 vital to a robust public participation process.

14 This is a scoping meeting, which means
15 that it is about me, or the DOE, listening and
16 learning from you. The DOE needs to hear what
17 issues you think that we should consider when we
18 conduct our environmental analysis.

19 The reason that we are here today is that
20 Minnesota Power is proposing to construct the Great
21 Northern Transmission Line Project, an international
22 transmission line, and they've asked the Department
23 of Energy for a permit to cross the U.S./Canadian
24 border. Minnesota Power submitted a presidential
25 permit application to the Department of Energy in

1 April of 2014.

2 Before any electric energy transmission
3 facility can be built across the U.S. international
4 border, the project proponent, or applicant, must
5 obtain a presidential permit from the U.S.
6 Department of Energy. A DOE presidential permit
7 authorizes a company to construct, operate,
8 maintain, and connect electric transmission
9 facilities at the border.

10 The DOE is involved in this proceeding
11 for one reason. The proposed transmission line
12 would cross the international border. If this line
13 did not cross the border I would not be here with
14 you today.

15 The DOE has no authority in the actual
16 siting of this line. Only the State of Minnesota,
17 specifically the Minnesota Public Utilities
18 Commission, has that authority. The Department of
19 Energy does not convey rights of eminent domain with
20 its presidential permit, nor can the DOE address
21 issues of compensation for lands that would be
22 impacted by the Great Northern project.

23 However, before DOE can issue this kind
24 of permit, we must comply with the National
25 Environmental Policy Act, or as we like to call it,

1 NEPA. NEPA is a federal law that serves as the
2 nation's basic charter for environmental protection.
3 It requires that all federal agencies consider the
4 potential environmental impact of their proposed
5 actions.

6 NEPA is based on a set of principles,
7 full disclosure and public participation. Again,
8 this is why we're here. This enhances understanding
9 on all sides.

10 We also have to explore alternatives to
11 the action, including a no action. And for the DOE
12 federal proposed action, no action would be the
13 nonissuance of the presidential permit.

14 We have to assess the potential impacts
15 of all of those alternatives with rigor and in an
16 apples-to-apples type of comparison. We have to
17 consider mitigation or ways to reduce or avoid
18 impacts that we've identified and weigh options and
19 explain those decisions clearly in the environmental
20 analysis document.

21 At the end of the day, NEPA promotes
22 better informed agency decision-making and provides
23 you the opportunity to learn about the agency's
24 proposed actions and to give us timely information
25 and comments about what it is that we're proposing

1 to do.

2 In terms of process, NEPA has been
3 referred to as an umbrella statute. It's a one-stop
4 shop that allows agencies and developers to comply
5 with numerous individual environmental, health and
6 safety related laws for which we're responsible. So
7 we will be analyzing potential effects from the
8 proposed action of granting the presidential permit
9 to numerous resource types, including biological
10 resources, as well as those that include human
11 issues or human concerns, including environmental
12 justice or recreation.

13 For this proposed project, the Department
14 of Energy determined that the appropriate level of
15 environmental analysis is to be an environmental
16 impact statement, or an EIS. From our point of
17 view, an EIS essentially tells the complete story of
18 a proposed project. The Great Northern EIS will
19 analyze all the foreseeable environmental impacts
20 that might flow from our granting of a presidential
21 permit. The EIS will also identify steps that might
22 be needed to mitigate those environmental impacts.

23 There are other federal agencies involved
24 in the creation of this EIS, and those include the
25 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, as

1 well as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They
2 have permitting or oversight authority for the
3 proposed facilities within their respective
4 jurisdictions. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is
5 a cooperating agency to the Department of Energy
6 currently in the preparation of this environmental
7 impact statement so they are involved in this
8 preparation moving forward.

9 Again, we are here to listen and to get
10 your comments and suggestions for the issues we
11 should be addressing in the EIS. We would also like
12 to know any alternative routes or route segments for
13 the proposed project. And Bill Storm, my colleague
14 at the Minnesota Department of Commerce, will cover
15 this in more detail a little bit later.

16 Just a little overview of our federal
17 process and what you all can anticipate in moving
18 forward over the next year, year and a half. We are
19 in the scoping comment period, the yellow circle.
20 Once the scoping period closes in mid-August, we
21 will get to work on preparing the draft
22 environmental impact statement. That will take us
23 several months to do that work.

24 Once the draft is completed, it'll be
25 made public and posted on our website, which I will

1 show a little later, as well as the state's
2 websites, and distributed to everyone on our mailing
3 list. So, again, if you want to be on the mailing
4 list, you can sign up on the back table by filling
5 out a card and you'll receive the document when that
6 is made public in the format you would like it. You
7 can also sign up a little bit later at the various
8 websites to make sure that we capture your name on
9 the list.

10 After the draft is released there will be
11 a 45-day comment period for you to submit -- for you
12 to review the draft EIS, to look it over, read it,
13 and then submit comments to us about maybe what
14 we've missed or give us some new information to help
15 our analysis.

16 During the comment period on the draft
17 EIS you'll be able to, again, submit comments,
18 either in writing or by e-mail. And then I will
19 also be coming back -- along with my colleague Chris
20 Lawrence, will coming back here to Minnesota to hold
21 public hearings to hear in person and to receive
22 oral comments on the draft EIS.

23 After the close of the comment period on
24 the draft, we will then go to prepare the final EIS.
25 Every comment received on the draft EIS will be

1 included in the final EIS. And we will respond in
2 the document to every comment that we receive.

3 When the final EIS is complete, it will
4 again be made public. It will be sent to everyone
5 on the mailing list and will be posted to the
6 websites. By law, the Department of Energy may not
7 make a final decision on the Great Northern
8 Transmission Line presidential permit application
9 until 30 days after the publication and public
10 release of that final environmental impact
11 statement. And that would result in the final green
12 box, which is called the record of decision.

13 At the completion of this EIS process,
14 the Department of Energy may or may not issue the
15 presidential permit. If the DOE were to issue the
16 presidential permit, the transmission line and
17 associated facilities could not be built unless and
18 until all other state, local, and federal permits
19 are obtained.

20 For this meeting, you can see we have a
21 court reporter who is here to record accurately what
22 it is that you say during your comments. Whether
23 you choose to speak today or not, you are invited to
24 send us written comments. All comments, whether
25 written or oral, are treated the same and have equal

1 weight. We will accept comments until mid-August
2 and we will consider your comments that are
3 submitted after that date to the extent that we can.

4 If you have any specific questions about
5 the project itself, we have several representatives
6 here from Minnesota Power, as well as a nice mapping
7 GIS station so that you can look up specific
8 properties or resources of interest and you can walk
9 away with a map that's a nice visual aid to help you
10 think about your comments maybe that you want to
11 submit to us at a later time. And I encourage you
12 to please utilize these resources while you're here.

13 And, with that, I'm going to turn this
14 over -- oh, you're right, I always forget.

15 And here is the address of the federal
16 website. We have both a state and federal. We have
17 three websites, we have the PUC for the Public
18 Utilities Commission proceeding and information
19 docket, we also have the Department of Commerce
20 website, which Bill Storm will be speaking about,
21 and we've established the federal website.

22 You can comment to me directly or you can
23 comment to Bill from the Minnesota Department of
24 Commerce. You only have to comment to one of us --
25 you can comment to both, we don't discourage you

1 from commenting, but if you comment to one of us
2 that will be captured collectively.

3 And just to back up a little bit, we are
4 preparing this EIS jointly with the state so that we
5 have a more efficient review process, as well as so
6 that we reduce the amount of times that you have to
7 submit comments and come to these informational and
8 public hearings and meetings.

9 So with that said now, I'm going to turn
10 it over to Dave Moeller from Minnesota Power to give
11 you some background on the project itself.

12 MR. DAVID MOELLER: Good morning. My
13 name is David Moeller, I'm an attorney at Minnesota
14 Power based in Duluth, Minnesota.

15 When we've had hearings in northern or
16 northwestern Minnesota, we introduced what Minnesota
17 Power is, but folks here in Grand Rapids, in the
18 Grand Rapids area know us well based on where we
19 serve and our plants in the area so I'll skip that
20 part.

21 We have many people here from Minnesota
22 Power who can answer your questions, as Julie said,
23 and we also have a GIS mapping station in the back
24 that will be available afterwards, for not only
25 getting maps for where your land is or property is,

1 but also if you need to look for different
2 alternatives, we'd be happy to work with you on
3 that.

4 For Minnesota Power the Great Northern
5 Transmission Line is part of a larger plan. We
6 filed it as part of our most recent integrated
7 resource plan approved by the Minnesota Public
8 Utilities Commission. And we see it as a way to
9 diversify our energy resources going forward by
10 adding additional hydro energy from Manitoba Hydro.

11 The need for this project is based really
12 on three factors.

13 First, diversity. Providing access to
14 clean, affordable, and reliable energy for Minnesota
15 Power customers, as well as the region as a whole.
16 This line will facilitate not just power and
17 resources for Minnesota Power, but for the region as
18 a whole.

19 Second, increasing demand. As people are
20 well aware, we have increasing demand on the Iron
21 Range, in particular, but for Minnesota Power's
22 service territory. And as a utility in the area we
23 have an obligation to serve and meet that demand.

24 And, finally, reliability. Having an
25 additional 500 kV line will then strengthen the

1 system reliability for Minnesota Power and the
2 region between Manitoba and Minnesota.

3 As we developed this project we had to
4 figure out what's the best way to have a siting and
5 permitting strategy. And we did that through a
6 number of steps. First charting what is the
7 critical path, how do we get from A to B, what is
8 the best way to do so. We had to reveal any fatal
9 flaws that we encountered as we developed potential
10 route options and other alternatives. Define what
11 the study area is, the map that shows kind of where
12 we started with the study area. We had to engage
13 stakeholders multiple times. We were in Grand
14 Rapids many times talking to landowners, local
15 officials, planning officials, state and federal and
16 local agencies and others as we developed this
17 project. Determined what the range of alternatives
18 is for routing and then, finally, apply for permits.
19 On April 15th, 2014 we applied for both the state
20 route permit as well as the federal presidential
21 permit that we're here today to discuss.

22 As we developed this project we had to
23 look at both the opportunities and constraints. And
24 I apologize for the small print on this slide, but
25 the handout has it in more detail in the back. But

1 if you can see, there's many more constraints for
2 where you can't build a transmission line or it's
3 tougher to build a transmission line than
4 opportunities, such as following existing
5 transmission lines and other existing rights-of-way.

6 As we developed this process and the
7 project we had to go through multiple stakeholder
8 outreach, as I mentioned earlier. And I'll just
9 flip through a few slides that show kind of where we
10 had different meetings for stakeholder outreach and
11 meeting with landowners and agencies. As you see,
12 Grand Rapids was a constant throughout these.

13 And then, finally, we came to route
14 alternatives that became part of our applications
15 that we filed with the state and with the Department
16 of Energy. And we had both a preferred and
17 alternative routes as set out by state statute. The
18 blue route is our preferred route and the orange
19 route is our alternative route. Both, we think,
20 would work from a feasibility standpoint, but we
21 have a preference for the blue route.

22 As we developed this project, we also
23 narrowed the scope. So starting from a study area
24 of over 19,000 square miles, we've gone to
25 corridors, route options, route alternatives, and

1 finally when the project is constructed, with our
2 goal to start construction in 2016 to have it in
3 service by 2020, we would have about eight square
4 miles of project impact. This would come through
5 the right-of-way, which is a 200-foot right-of-way
6 for the transmission line for a 500 kV transmission
7 line which would impact eight square miles.

8 This slide just shows the different
9 workshops, open houses, and other meetings we've
10 had, and then the different comments that we've
11 received or the number of comments that we've
12 received from landowners and stakeholders, including
13 comments received online, all prior to when the
14 official state and federal processes were kicked
15 off.

16 We also were here in February, as Tracy
17 mentioned, for a certificate of need scoping meeting
18 for the environmental report. So we were here in
19 February in a blizzard in Grand Rapids. So we've
20 been out here for the official part of it and we'll
21 be out here again in the future for future meetings
22 and hearings.

23 So in addition to the state route permit
24 and the federal presidential permit, we also need
25 other major permits. This is a list of five of

1 those, the five major permits. There will be other
2 downstream permits as well, but the main ones are
3 the state certificate of need which is issued by the
4 Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. That process
5 is still ongoing and we expect a decision by next
6 May or so on that from the PUC. The state route
7 permit from the PUC as well. The federal
8 presidential permit from the DOE. The section 404
9 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which
10 is for impacts to wetlands under the Clean Water
11 Act. And then we'll need a permit from the
12 Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to cross
13 state lands, or a license from the DNR to cross
14 state lands.

15 So, once again, we thank you for coming
16 today, we look forward to hearing your comments.
17 And we have resources available to answer those
18 either during the hearing itself or afterwards. And
19 so we appreciate that and thanks again.

20 MR. BILL STORM: Thanks, Dave.

21 Good morning, folks. My name is Bill
22 Storm. Many of you probably know me from previous
23 projects in this area.

24 I work for the Department of Commerce.
25 The Department of Commerce's role in this event or

1 activity that we're partaking in is we develop the
2 scope of the environmental review and we produce the
3 environmental review document. The Department of
4 Commerce [sic], they're the ultimate
5 decision-makers. And once we go through the scoping
6 process, the release of the environmental document,
7 the finalization of the environmental document, the
8 public hearings, and the record gets presented
9 before the Commission at the end, it's up to them to
10 make a final decision.

11 And the decisions they are going to be
12 making are, one, is the EIS adequate. That means
13 does the EIS adequately address all the issues and
14 concerns and alternatives that were brought up in
15 scope and made it to the scoping decision. The
16 second thing is they'll decide should a permit be
17 granted for a high voltage transmission line to
18 Minnesota Power and, if so, where should that line
19 be situated and what conditions should be attached
20 to that permit.

21 And I'm going to try not to move around
22 'cause I do that a lot.

23 But anyway, the schedule, this is
24 basically the same schedule that Julie and Tracy
25 went over and Dave touched on. It's basically just

1 a flow chart of the process. You can see we are
2 right now at the public meeting stage, we're here to
3 take your public comments, we're doing scoping as we
4 speak this week.

5 In Minnesota, projects that are large
6 transmission projects that come before the PUC for a
7 determination on routing can go through two
8 processes. There are two processes available. One
9 is the alternative process and the other one is the
10 full process. Both processes have the same
11 milestones and share some components. The full
12 process is, for those projects that are large and
13 complex, takes 12 months plus three to get through
14 it. The alternative process is a shorter process,
15 six months, it's for smaller projects, a lot less
16 complex projects. But the projects all do share
17 something. They all have a public scoping and
18 comment period.

19 Basically, we come out, we provide
20 information about the process and the project to the
21 public and we scope the environmental document.
22 What do you guys want to see in the environmental
23 document.

24 Following the public scoping meeting and
25 the public comment period, a scoping decision is

1 rendered. The scoping decision is the authority of
2 the Department of Commerce commissioner. And what I
3 will do is, once we end the road show, we were on
4 the northern track last week, this week we're doing
5 sort of the southern track, collecting people's
6 input, getting your issues, your concerns, your
7 alternatives on the table, once the comment period
8 closes, which is August 15th, and I'll discuss that
9 a little later, I will make a recommendation to my
10 commissioner of what should be in the scope.

11 And the scope is basically a table of
12 contents, what is the EIS, what issues, concerns,
13 and alternatives is the EIS going to evaluate. That
14 scoping decision comes out of the Department of
15 Commerce. My commissioner will then release the
16 scoping decision and the next step is the
17 environmental review document.

18 In the full process, the environmental
19 review document is an EIS. In the shorter
20 alternative process it's called an EA, an
21 environmental assessment. A little less scope,
22 little shorter document, a little less process to
23 that. But here in the full process we will be
24 putting out an environmental impact statement. And
25 the environmental impact statement comes out in a

1 draft first. So we release a draft environmental
2 impact statement. Once that's released we will come
3 back up for another two-week road show and have
4 public meetings to get your comments on the draft
5 environmental impact statement, what do you think of
6 the document, are there things you think I've
7 missed, are there things you think I didn't flesh
8 out enough. This is your opportunity to put
9 information into the record again concerning that
10 environmental review document that we generated.

11 Once the comment period closes that's
12 associated with DEIS meetings, we will then begin
13 work on the final EIS. And the final EIS is
14 basically the draft EIS issued with an additional
15 volume. That volume lists every comment we got on
16 the draft EIS and our responses to those comments.
17 And our responses may range from just a simple
18 acknowledgment of, yes, thank you for your comment,
19 or it may be, well, that's a good point you brought
20 up, that's good information you provided us, based
21 on your information we revised certain sections of
22 the draft EIS. And it'll point you back to those
23 sections and you will be able to go back to those
24 sections and you'll see bold, underlined, and
25 strikeouts for what was there and what the new

1 revised language is.

2 While we're working on the final EIS,
3 there is also a public hearing. And as Tracy said,
4 we'll be back up here with an ALJ, administrative
5 law judge, to take your comments on the record as a
6 whole. What conditions do you want to see in the
7 permit, what comments do you have to make about any
8 aspects of the project.

9 Like I said, the purpose that I'm here
10 for tonight is for the scoping meeting. The scoping
11 meeting is to provide the public an opportunity to
12 participate. I'm looking for your input on issues.
13 And there's two ways you can do that. One is you
14 can suggest alternative routes or alternative route
15 segments that you want me to consider for the
16 scoping decision. If they make it into the scoping
17 decision, then they will be evaluated in the
18 environmental document and proceed through the
19 hearing and into the final decision. The second is
20 I'm looking for issues or concerns you may have.
21 I'm looking for local knowledge. You guys may be
22 familiar with this route from hunting, hiking,
23 mountain biking along the routes, or within the area
24 that we're looking at, and you may be familiar with
25 maybe there's an old cedar stand that you know the

1 deer use for wintering that you're concerned about
2 and you want to make sure that my EIS discusses that
3 and talks about the impact that the project may have
4 on that area of concern and what ways can we
5 mitigate that impact.

6 By rule, when my commissioner releases a
7 scoping decision, it's got to have three things in
8 it. One is it's got to identify all the routes, you
9 know, the ones that the applicant's proposing, plus
10 any ones that the citizens have brought up and made
11 it through scope. It has to specify what impacts
12 are going to be addressed and what are the
13 mitigations to those impacts. And it also has to
14 provide a schedule, when do we think the document
15 will be released.

16 Julie touched on this a little bit.
17 Basically a definition of an environmental impact
18 statement, a written document that describes human
19 and environmental impacts associated with the
20 transmission project and any alternatives that made
21 it through scope and methods to mitigate them. So
22 that's basically the goal of this document.

23 As I said, there are -- the reason I'm
24 here tonight is to, since it's my responsibility to
25 scope the environmental document, it's my

1 responsibility to assist or aid in the preparation
2 of the environmental document, I'm coming to you to
3 ask you, give me your local knowledge of the issues,
4 concerns, that you want to make sure that I cover in
5 the document. And in preparation for that I always
6 do a draft scoping document. This is on the table
7 in the front, if you picked it up. It explains a
8 little bit about what environmental review is and it
9 also gives you, on page 5 and 6, I do believe, yep,
10 it also gives you an example of what the table of
11 contents of an environmental impact statement should
12 look like.

13 And this is broad categories. You can
14 see that, as I list the broad categories out, what
15 I'm seeking from you folks is help me define these
16 categories better, fill these categories in better.
17 And when it comes to issues, this is an example that
18 I'm talking about, if you look at this draft
19 document, you can see at 5.13, natural environment.
20 That's a broad category. Under that there are
21 several other categories that are also broad.
22 Flora, plants, that's a broad category. And as I
23 said, you may be aware with your local knowledge
24 that there's a particular plant, say the Lapland
25 buttercup that you know is there because you've been

1 mountain biking through this route, proposed route
2 area, you're concerned about it, you want to make
3 sure that I address in my environmental impact
4 statement, what's the potential impact that this
5 line is going to have on that plant that I'm
6 interested in. And what ways can be used to
7 mitigate that impact during construction, best
8 management practices, working on frozen ground, not
9 in the spring. How they use lay down areas, how
10 they control erosion. All that could have an effect
11 on this Lapland buttercup and this is your
12 opportunity to say I want to make sure you cover
13 that, Bill.

14 Now, there may be -- you may have
15 knowledge of an issue or a concern that you don't
16 think can be managed through construction best
17 practices or design of the line within the route
18 that has been proposed. So you may think, well, the
19 only way I think you can protect this, Bill, my
20 interest, whatever that thing may be, is moving the
21 route. And that's where we get into alternative
22 route segments.

23 And you can see, if you look at the draft
24 scoping document that I have on the table, one of
25 the categories, section 4, alternative routes.

1 So this is your opportunity to give me
2 alternative routes if you think there's an issue or
3 an item that you have that you think the only way to
4 avoid impacting that issue or concern is actually
5 moving the route, coming up with an alternative
6 route or route segment. And when I talk about this,
7 as you guys submit these route alternatives to me, I
8 have to sort of weigh them in making my
9 recommendation to the commissioner. And if your
10 rationale for wanting the route segment moved is I
11 just don't want it on my property, let's move it to
12 Joe's property, that's not going to carry the same
13 amount of weight as, hey, Bill, I know there's an
14 old stand of cedars in there and I know the deer
15 winter in there, and it's one of the few areas that
16 they can get away and get some protection. To me,
17 that's a higher concern than I don't want to live
18 with the transmission line. And I understand how
19 people feel about that and I understand how high
20 this bar is.

21 If you look at the rules, the rules state
22 how is the public to put alternatives on the route,
23 Bill? If you want to put an alternative on the
24 route you have to do two things. You have to
25 explain to me why you want that alternative on the

1 route, and in that explanation tell me what it is
2 you're mitigating. And if the impact that you're
3 worried about is I just don't want it on my
4 property, or I don't want to look at it, put it on
5 Joe's property, you haven't mitigated the situation,
6 you've just moved it to Joe. So that won't carry as
7 much weight as like the deer wintering stand that I
8 talked about.

9 The other thing you have to do is provide
10 me all the supporting information. Maps, your
11 rationale for why you want the alternative to be
12 considered. And because that's such a high bar --
13 and now I'm going to move, I'm sorry, Janet, so try
14 to stick with me.

15 Because of such a large high bar, I like
16 to run through some examples that have come up in
17 the past and that I've used in the past.

18 This here is a transmission line that was
19 proposed by an applicant running between Tower and
20 Embarrass in Minnesota, of course. And the original
21 proposal from the utility was they wanted to run
22 this new 115 kV line up the east side of this road,
23 135. There were a series of landowners along this
24 section up here of the road who realized that the
25 transmission line, the way it was proposed, was

1 going to run between their homes and the road.
2 They're set back 75, 100 feet, whatever the distance
3 that people are willing to plow up here, so they're
4 set back. They were uncomfortable with the line
5 running between their homes and the road, but they
6 had local knowledge that a whole block of land
7 behind them was all tax-forfeited land, it was
8 public land now. And they came to me and they said,
9 Bill, we think it's rational that, when available,
10 that the Commission consider putting the
11 transmission line, rather than putting it on private
12 land, move it over to this readily available public
13 land.

14 That made sense to me. I recommended
15 that to my commissioner, that that go into the scope
16 of the environmental document, it did go into the
17 scope of the environmental document, therefore it
18 was carried through to the environmental document
19 that was generated and considered, it was carried
20 through then to the public hearing and it finally
21 was carried through to the final decision in front
22 of the PUC.

23 And when the PUC looked at all the
24 record, not only just the environmental assessment,
25 but they also looked at the statements and the

1 testimony that came in through the public hearing,
2 they agreed. They thought, yes, that does make
3 sense, that we should move this line to public
4 property because it's readily available, rather than
5 going through the public property. So that's one
6 example.

7 Next example. This is in Chaska down in
8 the Twin Cities. This is a rebuild of a 69 kV line.
9 The utility wanted to rebuild an existing 69 kV line
10 that ran along that mall of that purple line there.
11 And there was some citizens in the community who
12 were concerned about a historic property that was
13 located right here. They felt that upgrading from a
14 69 kV line to a 115 kV line, which would have taller
15 poles, a wider right-of-way, a little bit more
16 capacity on the line, they felt that there was a
17 possibility that that would negatively impact that
18 historic feature of this historic property.

19 So they came to me and said, look, Bill,
20 we'd like you to consider in your scoping document
21 two things, two alternatives. One was an
22 alternative route segment, and it was defined as an
23 alternative route segment because it actually left
24 the route. The utility wanted to rebuild along the
25 existing right-of-way, but they also came in with a

1 route, a 500-foot-wide route. The first option that
2 these citizens wanted me to look at was, let's pull
3 that line out of the route, down to this abandoned
4 railroad track, and then run it along that until it
5 hooks back up to the existing line. The second
6 alternative they wanted me to look at is not a route
7 alternative, but an alignment alternative. They
8 said we see where the company wants an alignment, an
9 anticipated alignment, which is right along where
10 the 69 line is. They said how about if we just push
11 it across the road and look at that to hopefully
12 prevent this historic building from being possibly
13 potentially impacted.

14 That made sense to me. I recommended it
15 to my commissioner for the scope, it made it into
16 the scope, therefore it was evaluated in the
17 environmental document, made it through the public
18 hearings, and then at the end was laid -- the whole
19 record was laid out in front of the Commission, the
20 EA being a portion of that, the public record,
21 everything.

22 When they considered the whole record,
23 the Commission felt that the impact to the historic
24 building was not significant. They didn't feel that
25 this rebuild would be significant, so when they

1 permitted the line they permitted it the way the
2 utility requested, right along the rebuild of the 69
3 line.

4 Next example. This is, I think, near
5 Floodwood. The utility wanted to build a 115
6 transmission line and they wanted to run up the west
7 side of this road and then turn and run along the
8 south side of this county road. The citizens in the
9 area who lived along this county road, and this goes
10 out far, this is just a little section of it so it's
11 a significant run. They had their homes along the
12 road, just like many do, when you're set back from
13 the road enough distance that you can stand to plow,
14 I guess, in the winter. They had some local
15 knowledge and they knew all the land along this
16 whole stretch up here was corporate land, Blandin
17 Paper land, some other corporate land that was used
18 for the paper industry, the pulp industry. No homes
19 along it, nobody living on it, just resource land.

20 They came to me and said, look, Bill, we
21 think it makes sense to, rather than building this
22 transmission across our driveways by our homes, can
23 we move it to the north side of that line? Can you
24 look at the impacts or can that make it to scope so
25 you can look at the impacts of moving that line?

1 That made sense to me. I recommended it
2 to my commissioner, my commissioner agreed, it made
3 it to the scope. Since it made it to scope it was
4 evaluated in the environmental document, went
5 through the public hearing,.

6 And then at the end when the whole record
7 was laid out in front of the Commissioners, the EA
8 plus all the testimony and everything else that
9 comes out in public hearing, the Commissioners
10 agreed that that made sense and when they issued the
11 permit they required that the utility build that
12 transmission line along the north side of that road.

13 Another example. This is, I think, again
14 near the Floodwood area. This is a rebuild of a 69
15 kV line. There's a 69 kV line that ran along the
16 west side of this road here. The utility wanted to
17 rebuild it to 115. Again, that required taller
18 towers, a little wider right-of-way, more capacity
19 on the line. There was a local property owner
20 family here who had a memorial service, or memorial
21 placement just outside the existing right-of-way of
22 that 69 line. And they were concerned that the
23 widening of the route, the taller poles, maybe a
24 little more tree clearing that would be required,
25 they were afraid that that would have a negative

1 impact on their family's memorial. They came to me
2 and asked me if I would consider it.

3 That made sense to me, it was worth
4 looking at and considering, so I recommended to my
5 commissioner that we look at putting the
6 transmission line on the other side of the road. It
7 made it into the scoping decision, was evaluated in
8 the EA, went to the public hearing,.

9 And then again at the end when the whole
10 record was laid in front of the Commission, the
11 Commission considered it, and when they looked at
12 the environmental report that laid out photographic
13 renderings of what it would look like from the
14 memorial, the distances that the memorial existed
15 from the existing line to the new line, all the
16 measurements, all the facts, the Commission felt
17 that that memorial would not be significantly
18 impacted. So when they granted the permit, they
19 granted it for what the utility requested, to run
20 along the west side of that road there.

21 Another example. This is in the
22 Glencoe/Waconia area. This is another rebuild.
23 There was a 69 kV line that ran east-west along
24 County Road 34. Right here. The utility wanted to
25 upgrade that to a 115. Again, little taller towers,

1 a little wider right-of-way, more capacity on the
2 line. But from the time that the 69 line was built
3 to a couple years ago when we got around -- when
4 this project came to surface, the county had moved
5 the County Road 34. County Road 34 used to follow
6 this existing 69 line, or vice versa, along there.
7 Somewhere after that transmission line was built,
8 they moved the county road up. The landowners who
9 lived along this section came to me and said, well,
10 look, Bill, if they are going to have to tear down
11 and rebuild that line, why not readjust it and
12 realign it to the existing right-of-way of the
13 county road like it was before originally.

14 That made sense to me. I recommended
15 that to my commissioner -- excuse me -- my
16 commissioner agreed, put it in the scope. Since it
17 was in the scope it got evaluated in the
18 environmental assessment, went to the public
19 hearing, and then was laid out again in front of the
20 Commission with all the facts.

21 And the Commissioners agreed that, yes,
22 that makes sense. When they issued the permit they
23 required the utility to realign the transmission
24 line with the county road that had been moved.

25 So that's some examples of what I'm

1 looking for, and you guys helping me scope out what
2 possible alternatives I could look at in the
3 environmental document. And we can certainly talk
4 more about that when we get to the question and
5 answering portion.

6 This slide here is to just show you that
7 I don't work in isolation. That the downstream
8 permitting agencies that both -- that Dave referred
9 to. The DOT, if the line is going to cross a DOT
10 jurisdiction road they need a permit from the DOT.
11 The DNR, if they're going to cross public lands or
12 waters they need a permit from the DNR. They may
13 need a permit from the Pollution Control Agency for
14 erosion control measures, that type of thing. All
15 of these agencies are required by statute and rule
16 to participate in the program. So I'm not working
17 in isolation, I'm seeking out information from the
18 experts in the various fields. In addition, in this
19 case, as Julie said, since we're doing a joint
20 environmental document, we are also working with the
21 DOE, so we have another group of folks helping us
22 out.

23 Downstream permits. Dave already covered
24 that a little bit. Once they get our permit, that's
25 not the go sign, they still have to get other

1 permits down the line before they can construct.

2 Okay. Information. As Tracy said and
3 Jules said, and I'm sure Dave, too, we all have ways
4 for you to track this project. Maybe too many ways.
5 But you can go to the PUC's website, which is
6 eDockets. I look at eDockets as a professional
7 site. It's where the official record is kept and
8 there's a lot of information there. The applicant
9 also, they also maintain a website for the citizens
10 to go get information on. The DOE maintains a
11 website. And the Department of Commerce maintains a
12 website. And what I do with our website is any
13 documents, public comments, the draft scoping
14 decision, the real scoping decision, all these
15 documents, I PDF them, put them on our website, you
16 can download them, print them out, and view them.
17 So that's just another -- there are many avenues on
18 the Great Northern Transmission Line for you to get
19 information.

20 And, like I said, what we're here tonight
21 to do is get input from the public. That's what
22 we're doing. And there's a comment period that's
23 open for you to either give me issues, concerns, or
24 alternatives. That comment period is open until
25 August 15th. There's a little juxtaposition in

1 their comment period, they have the 12th, we're
2 falling back to the longest period, which is the
3 15th. So you can get your comments to me snail
4 mail, e-mail, fax. You can go to my website and
5 make a comment there. You can put your comments in
6 the way Julie told you to give them. You can
7 comment to us both if you want, but you only have to
8 comment to one of us, we are sharing the
9 information, we are working on the project directly.
10 But your comments do have to be in by August 15th.

11 With that, I'm going to turn it over to
12 the important part. You noticed when you came in,
13 we have these yellow cards. I always bring a stack
14 of yellow cards for speakers, it helps move things
15 along, especially if I -- sometimes I have four,
16 three hundred people at these meetings, it helps.
17 The turnout is a little lighter here.

18 But what I'll do is I'll call them from
19 the cards. When I call your name, stand up, Julie
20 will come to you with the mic. I want you to state
21 and spell your name for the court reporter. Talk
22 slower than me so she can follow you. And then ask
23 your question, make your comment, say your piece.
24 If you have a question, I will try to direct that
25 question to -- if it can reasonably be answered,

1 I'll try to direct that question either to the
2 applicant, to the PUC staff, to the DOE staff, or
3 myself to answer your question, to try the best we
4 can to answer your question. Some of your questions
5 might be more complex and need a little bit more
6 time to get back. And we have a court reporter
7 here, we will make sure that your comment gets
8 captured and it gets answered along the way as we
9 move through the scoping process.

10 So I'm going to start. Carol Overland.

11 MS. CAROL OVERLAND: Thank you. I get to
12 be first this time.

13 My name is Carol Overland. Is this on?
14 It is, okay.

15 I am an attorney, I'm representing
16 residents and ratepayers against the Not-So-Great
17 Northern Transmission Line. That's another site
18 where you can get information about this. Google
19 Great Northern Transmission Line, and the second one
20 down will be the Not-So-Great Northern Transmission
21 Line site. What I do there is keep people apprised
22 of what's going on.

23 It's very important, I'm really glad to
24 see the DOE involved in this. Because those of us
25 who went through the environmental review process

1 for the Mesaba project know how important that is,
2 and a lot of problems were pointed out with that.
3 The DOE helped push this to get a very thorough
4 review. And so I urge you to make your comments,
5 especially very specific ones.

6 Like, in particular, some people are
7 getting hit by many, many projects going over their
8 lands. A pipeline, then a transmission line, then
9 this big, huge transmission line. You know, that is
10 a really significant problem and take a look -- ask
11 them to take a look at cumulative impacts of this
12 line, plus whatever else might be there already.
13 That's a really important thing to take a look at
14 when you're looking at routing.

15 Another thing that's really important is
16 that this is a segmented project. This is just the
17 Minnesota part. There is the Manitoba part, there's
18 the Wisconsin part, there's the part going up and
19 over the UP and then down to Detroit. This is for
20 regional sales going out through Minnesota to
21 somewhere else, primarily. That's the purpose of
22 it. So they need to take a look at that, because
23 under NEPA, which is federal environmental review
24 law, you have to look at the entire project.
25 Segmenting is not okay. So take a look at that.

1 So I urge you to make your comments in
2 writing, as many ways as you possibly can. A good
3 way to do it is if you have issues about your
4 particular piece of property, to have them print out
5 a map, they're really good at that, and they'll
6 locate your property and then you can write in on
7 that any comments that you have about, well, we've
8 got this, we've got this, you don't know about this
9 'cause you haven't been on our land, you don't know
10 about this. Or you have this stretch where there
11 are all these houses and you could build here
12 instead of there.

13 But also in the federal process they will
14 be looking at need. And this is a line that isn't
15 needed. They say that it's for a power purchase
16 agreement, and that's about this big, but the line
17 is gigantic. It's huge. Way overdesigned for what
18 their stated purpose is. So have them take a look
19 at that and look at it.

20 When you look at what the potential
21 capacity is of this line, the EMF impacts need to be
22 addressed, that you need to look at what the full
23 potential range of EMF impacts are. You know, that
24 won't happen unless you really push for it. So I
25 urge you to really push for that, fill out your

1 comments --

2 Oh, another thing. Eagle take permits,
3 does this need eagle take permits? How many eagles
4 will be killed, how many birds protected by, you
5 know, federal law could be killed by this. Other
6 transmission projects that I've worked on have
7 required eagle take permits, so that's something to
8 take a look at and that Bill will have to look at.

9 So, please, send your comments in. And
10 for another view of this, check out the maps of the
11 not-so-great-northern-transmission-line.org, and you
12 can shoot me an e-mail and I can add you to a list
13 where I send out notices on when comments are due
14 and when there are meetings and such.

15 Thank you. I appreciate the advertising
16 time.

17 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you, Carol.

18 Okay. Rich Libbey.

19 MR. RICHARD LIBBEY: I'm Rich Libbey,
20 18603 Lake Drive, Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

21 I'd just like to start on that this is a
22 very major power line, it has towers that could be
23 140 feet high, the right-of-way is going to be 200
24 feet wide. And as proposed, at least Itasca County,
25 it does not really follow any existing transmission

1 lines. In fact, over the entire route, the orange
2 route would follow 30 percent of existing
3 transmission lines over the 220-mile corridor, and
4 the blue route would be about 38 percent. I'd like
5 to see that upped, if possible, because when you cut
6 a new power line across country like in Itasca
7 County, you're going to impact a lot of virgin
8 territory. Whereas, if you follow an existing
9 route, you basically just move the side perimeter
10 over 200 feet.

11 With the proposed route you're going to
12 have an edge effect, which -- and the environment is
13 not beneficial. If you cut a path through, it opens
14 up a pathway for invasive species. It also creates
15 an edge effect, which it can impact migratory song
16 birds. Cowbirds and non-native type birds can move
17 along that corridor. They prefer the edges, and it
18 can affect the wildlife.

19 So one thing I would like to see is that
20 where the line comes down north of Bigfork, there's
21 an existing 230 kV line and a 500 kV line in
22 existence that follows just on the west side of
23 Highway 65 north of Nashwauk. The proposed route is
24 a new path between the Scenic Highway and Highway
25 65. If they were to follow this route, you'd avoid

1 all these other negative impacts. And it would
2 increase the length of the route somewhat, but when
3 you have a 220-mile route, you increase the length
4 maybe five miles, that would not be significant.

5 One issue that Minnesota Power has
6 pointed out is that if you have too many large
7 voltage power lines paralleling each other, in the
8 case of a wind event or an ice event or a tornado,
9 that all the lines could be taken down at once.
10 Their proposal is to have the new line about five
11 miles west of the existing corridor. With the type
12 of storm events we get up here, tornadoes are very
13 unusual, we do get straight line winds, and we get
14 ice events. A straight line wind event and an ice
15 event would very likely take out all the lines
16 anyway, or could. And as part of the mitigation, if
17 you follow the existing route there are ways you can
18 strengthen the structures when you build them so
19 they're not so susceptible.

20 Also, they are doing a study right now,
21 that the federal government is doing, or maybe it's
22 MISO, Midwest Independent System Operators, or is it
23 FERC, maybe it's FERC. They're studying what the
24 likelihood is of the line being taken down by a
25 storm event in a certain number of years. The

1 results aren't released yet, but I think that would
2 be important in considering this alternative route.
3 And, also, where the other lines go is important.

4 The 500 kV line that's owned by Xcel
5 Energy, goes to southern Minnesota and serves a
6 different load than Minnesota Power does. The
7 350 kV line goes to Shannon Sub, which is in
8 Minnesota Power's territory, but if all the lines
9 are taken down I think the study should verify what
10 impact it will or will not have on the system. If
11 those impacts are so great that that's not a good
12 route, so be it. But we know what the impacts are
13 going to be to build a new line across country and
14 across Itasca County.

15 I guess another question I have, I'll
16 maybe come back to Itasca County, but the line
17 starts west of Warroad, and if you look at -- I
18 guess Minnesota Power really didn't provide a map
19 with the existing transmission lines on it. If you
20 go to their website all you'll see is where the
21 route corridor goes. But nowhere do they have a map
22 that shows where the existing transmission lines
23 are.

24 I requested it from them at several
25 meetings, and their response was that it would

1 confuse the public to see where their existing lines
2 are because there are too many lines on the map.

3 When they filed their route application,
4 I looked in there to see if they had existing lines
5 on a map, which they didn't. And after I put in a
6 request for it on the completeness of the document,
7 they didn't include such a map. But I have some
8 available here if anybody is interested.

9 But going back to the crossing of the
10 border, there are two lines that come across now,
11 the 230 and the 350 and the 500 kV line, and
12 Minnesota Power is entering to the west of that,
13 where I understand there's some issues with an
14 airport clearances of that line, so they're talking
15 about moving it east.

16 We don't know what's going on, at least
17 here in Minnesota on the northern part of the
18 border, why Canada says, okay, we're going to stop
19 here; Minnesota, you pick up here. Can we go back
20 to them and say we're going to start here, you come
21 to us? But I'm wondering what the constraints are
22 on the other side of the border that they're not
23 following the existing routes. That's another
24 suggestion I have.

25 When it comes to building the line

9 On this route, I think, what is it, 40
10 percent or something or 50 percent is going to cross
11 state land and 12 percent county land. But I would
12 suggest that you do surveys for goshawks because the
13 goshawks tend to be in old groves, contiguous
14 forests, and if you cut up a new swath you're
15 opening it up and modifying the environment.

16 I think what else I had, I had a lot of
17 stuff written down, but through Itasca County,
18 basically, there is another line, it's a 69 kV line
19 that comes down from Bigfork on the west side of
20 Highway 38, that I think maybe we could do -- at
21 least explore that possibility. I'm hoping that we
22 can look at the paralleling existing lines as the
23 primary alternative.

24 Can I take a break, Bill --

25 MR. BILL STORM: Sure, you can come back.

1 MR. RICHARD LIBBEY: -- and come back in
2 a little bit?

3 Oh, on the middle segment there, we've
4 got a C-1 alternative, I think, that goes around
5 Littlefork, Little Falls, because there's an issue
6 with the airport. And I'm just wondering if there's
7 a way to shorten the length of the new angle that
8 goes across there. Right now it kind of goes
9 through quite a bit of new territory as it comes
10 down.

11 And, also, the preferred route for
12 Minnesota Power, as I understand, would have been to
13 follow the existing, I think, it's a 500 kV line
14 that comes down that goes down by east of Red Lake.
15 But there's two scientific and natural areas in
16 there, the Red Lake Peatland and the Lost Lake
17 Peatland. There's a statutory law, but there's a
18 Minnesota statute that you can't build in an
19 existing SNA. There is already a line there, so I
20 guess one thing to look at is the environmental
21 effects of going on the orange and blue routes that
22 are proposed, or if there's some waiver they could
23 get to widen that line and parallel it. I know the
24 DNR and Minnesota Power have been discussing that.
25 But just another option that's out there.

1 Thanks.

2 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you, Richard.

3 That was a lot of stuff there, Richard.

4 Minnesota Power, do you want any comment
5 on that? You don't have to.

6 MR. JIM ATKINSON: There was a lot of
7 things that were covered.

8 MR. BILL STORM: Okay, that's fine.

9 That was all the cards I have, so my
10 default position is to go by a show of hands. And,
11 again, here we go.

12 Anybody, did that jog anybody, anybody
13 want to ask a question, make a comment?

14 Okay, sir. Would you please stand up and
15 let Julie bring you the mic, and state and spell
16 your name?

17 MR. CAVOUR JOHNSON: Cavour Johnson.

18 C-A-V-O-U-R, first name. Johnson, the last name.

19 If what I'm saying is inappropriate, cut
20 me off if it isn't going to help. But I just wanted
21 to go through the history of part of the routing up
22 by Hartley Lake and Scooty Lake and Wolf Lake.

23 The original routes were close to both
24 Scooty and Hartley Lake, the eastern shore. The
25 alternative route is the same way on both lakes. We

1 met with Jim Atkinson of Minnesota Power to see if
2 those could be changed. At the time of their
3 submission they weren't able to change that and they
4 suggested getting -- if we wanted to do something,
5 getting together on all three lakes and coming up
6 with a petition for a route.

7 And we kind of pursued that route and I
8 was in charge of Hartley Lake. The Hartley Lake
9 Association voted to move the line further east.
10 And the other lakes, Scooty Lake and Wolf Lake, do
11 not have associations, so I contacted as many people
12 as I could on those lakes as far as interest in a
13 petition to move both routes further east, away from
14 the lakes. I was only able to reach about 70 to 75
15 percent of the residents on those lakes, and they
16 were in favor of that, moving the line and signed a
17 petition.

18 But in the meantime, Minnesota Power had
19 to reintroduce or re-present their routing and they
20 were able to change the route to what we preferred.
21 So those areas that they have in that area are, I
22 mean, although individuals would probably prefer to
23 see it in a different county or whatever, those
24 routes we prefer to what they had originally. And
25 I'm just stating that so that you're aware that if

1 there's changes from that, we do not want them
2 closer to the lakes in those areas.

3 Thank you.

4 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you.

5 Okay. Show of hands? Comments?

6 Questions?

7 Sir, in the back, please stand, state and
8 spell your name.

9 MR. BOB NICK: Can you hear me? Is the
10 mic on?

11 MR. BILL STORM: You've got to keep the
12 mic real close to your mouth.

13 MR. BOB NICK: This gentleman here had
14 his back to us.

15 Anyway, the power lines are coming down
16 here on county land. Is the power company going to
17 buy that land from the county or are they going to
18 rent it? We'd have ongoing income from the rental
19 that way, not buying it.

20 Secondly, the road where that's going to
21 come down, under the power line, I assume, which
22 it's going to be, right? To take and with the
23 concrete and the steel and everything else that goes
24 into those lines. Is that road going to be
25 maintained? Or is it just a one-time deal and you

1 abandon it? If it's going to be maintained, what
2 kind of things have you done to take and keep it
3 from being abused by snowmobilers or ATVers. You
4 drive along the interstate and 169, it's nothing but
5 a trash heap. You've seen the property bags that is
6 picked up by the Boy Scouts or whatever.

7 And what is the timeline to be completed
8 on this power line? And, secondly, what cost? And
9 are you going to hire any local labor? These issues
10 have not been addressed.

11 This is all wonderful, Bill, to have all
12 this stuff here with all the permits, but I don't
13 think anybody cares about the permits. It's how
14 they're going to affect me, you know. And if
15 somebody gets hurt on this property, is it the power
16 line's problem or is it the county's problem if it's
17 county land? Suing is a national pastime, not
18 baseball anymore.

19 MR. BILL STORM: If you'll take a breath,
20 I'll ask Minnesota Power.

21 MR. JIM ATKINSON: I can address a couple
22 of them, anyway.

23 MR. BILL STORM: Okay. We'll let
24 Minnesota Power catch a couple of your points there.
25 We will certainly try to capture when we go through

1 scope, the scoping document of all the comments,
2 we'll try to answer some of these questions that
3 we're missing, but let's give Minnesota Power an
4 opportunity to hit some of the bullets that you hit.

5 MR. JIM ATKINSON: Jim Atkinson with
6 Minnesota Power.

7 UNIDENTIFIED: You earned your dinner
8 tonight.

9 DR. JULIE ANN SMITH: We need your name.

10 MR. BOB NICK: Oh, Nick, over by Twin
11 Lakes. Bob Nick, N-I-C-K.

12 COURT REPORTER: Nick?

13 MR. BOB NICK: Yes, it is. That's the
14 look you're giving me, like, oh.

15 MR. BILL STORM: Let's give Jim a chance
16 to answer the question.

17 MR. BOB NICK: Okay. Please.

18 MR. JIM ATKINSON: Again, Jim Atkinson
19 with Minnesota Power.

20 One of the questions had to do with
21 county land and where we cross that. The answer is
22 that if it's truly county fee land, it might
23 actually be a permanent easement we'd have to pay
24 for. If it's state land we'll actually have to get
25 a license and we'll have to pay a fee for that as

1 well.

2 As far as access roads, in most cases
3 there will not be any permanent access road. A lot
4 of this goes through the woods, through wetland
5 areas as well, and there's likely to be a temporary
6 timber mat road through along the whole thing. But
7 that will be removed immediately upon completion of
8 construction.

9 I think you asked the question about when
10 would this be done. Our required in-service date
11 with our power purchase agreement is June 1st of
12 2020, so sometime before that, and not likely very
13 long before that.

14 If there was other questions, I don't
15 know if I remember all of them.

16 MR. DAVID MOELLER: Labor and
17 compensation.

18 MR. JIM ATKINSON: Oh, yeah. Labor,
19 there will be some local labor involved. There will
20 be specialty construction companies from other areas
21 that would have to be hired as well. So it would be
22 a combination of those two things.

23 There will be a significant property tax
24 impact as a result of the line, likely in the
25 vicinity of about \$17 to \$19 million a year in new

1 property taxes.

2 Does that answer some of your questions?

3 MR. BOB NICK: The \$19 million you just
4 mentioned, is that going to be on our tax bill or
5 yours?

6 MR. JIM ATKINSON: Ours.

7 MR. BOB NICK: Okay. Now, since this
8 line is coming through the northern part of the
9 state, maybe the legislature will address it that
10 since our property is impacted, why does not that
11 come to this area of the state versus the south?

12 MR. JIM ATKINSON: It does.

13 MR. BOB NICK: It does. So these are the
14 things you guys can be addressing and you're not
15 telling anybody.

16 MR. JIM ATKINSON: We do bring that up
17 every time we have an open house and so forth, so we
18 do address that.

19 MR. BOB NICK: Yeah. Well, okay. I
20 appreciate it.

21 Thank you. Have a good day.

22 MR. BILL STORM: Okay. Sir, I would
23 ask -- I'd encourage you to put your comments in
24 writing again to me by August 15th. Just write your
25 comments out as bullet points. And we'll make sure

1 when we do the scoping document we will answer as
2 many of those questions as we can. We will get that
3 answer to you.

4 Okay. Delores. Could you please come
5 forward with the mic, face the court reporter. I'm
6 sorry. State and spell your name.

7 MS. DELORES WHITE: My name is Delores
8 White, D-E-L-O-R-E-S, White. I live in Bovey.

9 The question I have, I read somewhere
10 that Minnesota Power was not going to share any
11 existing corridors. Is that -- I read that in one
12 of the mailings I got.

13 MR. BILL STORM: Okay. Jim, do you want
14 to answer that?

15 MR. JIM ATKINSON: I sure would. Jim
16 Atkinson again with Minnesota Power.

17 The answer to the question is we're
18 trying to collocate with as many existing corridors
19 as we can. So but there's various reasons in some
20 circumstances why we can't or choose not to.

21 MS. DELORES WHITE: Okay.

22 MR. BILL STORM: Anything else?

23 MS. DELORES WHITE: No, just to comment
24 that I'm unhappy about the line coming through my
25 property. Because the trees are pretty old, they've

1 been there since I was a child and I'm in my 60s
2 now, and so I hate to see that happen to my
3 property. And it seems like everybody wants to come
4 through. That just upsets me, that's all.

5 MR. BILL STORM: I understand. Thank
6 you, Delores.

7 Is there someone else? Please come
8 forward, Linda, and make your comment, state and
9 spell your name, face the court reporter. The
10 acoustics in this room aren't so great for the court
11 reporter. Keep the mic close to your mouth, too,
12 that mic doesn't pick up too well.

13 MS. LINDA CASTAGNERI: My name is Linda
14 Castagneri, L-I-N-D-A, C-A-S, as in Sam,
15 T-A-G-N-E-R-I.

16 I just have a couple of -- one question
17 and one comment. Initially I was on the
18 notification list from Minnesota Power. Then you
19 all sent me a letter saying I was no longer in the
20 impacted area. When I came in today, Gerry was very
21 nice, he assisted me back there, and I am now 1,200
22 feet from one edge of the corridor and 1,900 feet
23 from the other edge of the corridor.

24 So I'd like you to all tell me, what is
25 your criteria for notification? 'Cause I still

1 think I'm pretty close to being taken off the list.
2 That's my first comment.

3 And my second comment regards the
4 cumulative impact of every project. We have been
5 living the project of the year since 2005. Whether
6 it was Minnesota -- the Mesaba project, or this
7 project. And I do really think it does bear some
8 merit for it to be looked at, this continuing
9 cumulative impact of every project.

10 So thank you.

11 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you, Linda.

12 One comment I want to make for Linda.
13 There is an official project list that the state and
14 the DOE use, and if you're not on that list or you
15 don't think you're on that list, please fill out an
16 orange card and give it to Tracy to make sure you're
17 on that official list.

18 Now, Minnesota Power may maintain their
19 own list for their own purposes, but our list,
20 anybody who is interested in getting any kind of
21 notification of the documents that are produced, of
22 meetings coming up, anything, please make sure
23 you're on our list, okay.

24 Okay. Show of hands?

25 Gentleman, please come forward, state and

1 spell your name, face the court reporter as much as
2 you can. Thank you.

3 MR. MARK WALSH: Mark Walsh, W-A-L-S-H.

4 I've got a couple of concerns. First
5 would be, I guess it goes right back to the basics
6 of it, is why do we need this line? Or is it just
7 economics? Is it someone looking to make money?

8 MR. BILL STORM: Well, there is -- in
9 Minnesota, if a utility wants to build a large
10 energy project, whether it be a transmission line or
11 a power plant, there are two things they may need
12 from the Commission. The first thing is a
13 certificate of need. And that is where they have to
14 make their case to the Commission about why they
15 need the power and why they need it in the form of a
16 transmission line versus generation or vice versa.
17 So they have to get that approval from the PUC
18 before they can get the approval for a route or a
19 construction for a power plant.

20 As you know, I was up here in the winter
21 doing the same thing, 'cause as Tracy pointed out,
22 there is a separate docket on the need. And the
23 need and the routing, although it might not seem
24 quite right, they can run concurrently. The two
25 processes can run concurrently. However, the

1 applicant must get approval for the certificate of
2 need before they can get approval for a route. And
3 by running them concurrently, which the rules allow
4 them to run, they are taking the chance that all the
5 effort they're putting in on the routing side now
6 may be for naught if they fail to prove their case
7 for the need. But the system does -- the rules do
8 allow the processes to run concurrently. It's
9 just -- I guess it's to save time and to help the
10 business community in having some consistency and
11 some anticipated schedule. But they are taking the
12 risk then, because if they fail to get their need
13 certificate, all the effort for the routing will be
14 moot. So --

15 MR. MARK WALSH: So the need has not been
16 established, then?

17 MR. BILL STORM: No. The process is
18 running right now. I put out -- about two weeks ago
19 I put out the environmental document relative to
20 that process, and that document looked at what are
21 the impacts of this proposed project from a high
22 elevation, size, type, and timing situation. A very
23 high elevation look. So basically the environmental
24 review around the need is basically, if the utility
25 comes with a transmission project like this one, how

1 about -- what's the impact of that transmission
2 project compared to if we built a power plant right
3 here. So that's what the need is all about. The
4 need process is about the form of the power, the
5 size, type, and timing of the power.

6 The routing process is where the rubber
7 meets the road. If they are successful in the need
8 and the Public Utilities Commission does agree that,
9 yes, you have the need and, yes, transmission is the
10 answer, this process, the routing process, is where
11 we evaluate that. What are the impacts on the
12 ground of actually building this thing.

13 MR. MARK WALSH: Okay. So in the need
14 process they would have to explain where that power
15 will be used or why it's needed?

16 MR. BILL STORM: They have to state the
17 purpose and need, yes, for sure.

18 MR. MARK WALSH: Okay. But we don't know
19 what that is yet?

20 MR. BILL STORM: No, they stated it in
21 their application and it's covered in the ER, the
22 environmental document for the need. If you guys
23 want to give a short synopsis on it, you can. If
24 you don't, you don't have to.

25 MR. MARK WALSH: They can, okay, in a

1 moment then, all right.

2 So just a couple of other items I want to
3 cover.

4 Next, when you talk about environmental
5 studies, now there's an EA or a full assessment,
6 right? You touched on both of those and I just
7 wanted to make sure that there's a full assessment
8 going to be done.

9 MR. BILL STORM: In Minnesota there are
10 two ways that a permit application, a routing permit
11 can be --

12 MR. MARK WALSH: Yes.

13 MR. BILL STORM: -- the full and the
14 alternative.

15 MR. MARK WALSH: Yes.

16 MR. BILL STORM: This, because of the
17 size of it -- and they have thresholds in the rules.
18 If you're this many kilovolts and this long, you
19 can't be the short process, you have to be the long
20 process. So they're in the full process. The full
21 process requires an environmental impact statement.
22 The short process requires an EA.

23 MR. MARK WALSH: An assessment, yeah.

24 MR. BILL STORM: The documents are pretty
25 similar. It's the process that surrounds the

1 documents may be a little different. The EIS is
2 first released as a draft and then it's followed up
3 by public meetings. We come around and we ask you,
4 the people, what did we do wrong with this document,
5 or what do you want to see in this document. And we
6 take all that information and we generate a final
7 EIS.

8 On the short process, the alternative
9 process, in the EA, the environmental assessment,
10 it's an environmental review document, but it's only
11 released one time as a final document. There is no
12 second bite of the apple, like you say. Now, the
13 public can talk about it in the public hearing, both
14 processes at the public hearing, so --

15 MR. MARK WALSH: Okay. So it's the full
16 study, though.

17 MR. BILL STORM: It's the full study.

18 DR. JULIE ANN SMITH: And if I may
19 address from the federal side, from the National
20 Environmental Policy Act, there are also choices in
21 terms of, you know, the robustness of the process.
22 And as I pointed out in my talk, the federal
23 government has determined that we need to go through
24 our most robust process, which is also the
25 environmental impact statement.

1 MR. MARK WALSH: Very good. Very good.

2 Another item I just wanted to touch on.

3 I'm not a real power line type of guy. When you
4 talk about a little bit taller than the existing
5 power lines out there, what are we talking about
6 actual height wise? I mean, you know. And are
7 there lights on these towers?

8 MR. BILL STORM: Well, there are no
9 lights on the towers, but I'll let --

10 MR. MARK WALSH: So they're not tall
11 enough to have lights on them?

12 MR. BILL STORM: Let's take a breath and
13 let Jim -- you had two points, do you remember the
14 first point?

15 MR. JIM ATKINSON: The first one was
16 about need, I think that's best for the need docket.
17 I can talk about the towers. The tower structures
18 would be a maximum height of 150 feet tall, which is
19 considerably taller than most transmission lines.

20 MR. MARK WALSH: What are they now?

21 MR. JIM ATKINSON: Which ones?

22 MR. MARK WALSH: See, a 500 kV, you know,
23 I'm talking about 120 volts to plug in my lights,
24 you know.

25 MR. JIM ATKINSON: Most 500 kV lines

1 would have similar height structures.

2 MR. MARK WALSH: Okay. But say the ones
3 that run now, with the three lines that hang from
4 them.

5 MR. JIM ATKINSON: Well, those are
6 various voltages, but those are likely somewhere
7 between 75 to 100, may 110 feet tall.

8 MR. MARK WALSH: So these are
9 considerably taller, then?

10 MR. JIM ATKINSON: They are, yes.

11 MR. MARK WALSH: And they're not tall
12 enough to where they need to have some type of light
13 on them at night for flights or planes or skydivers
14 or whatever?

15 MR. JIM ATKINSON: That's correct. Yeah,
16 so we don't anticipate lights on any of them.

17 MR. MARK WALSH: Okay.

18 MR. BILL STORM: Another question, sir?

19 MR. MARK WALSH: Oh, I've got hundreds of
20 them.

21 MR. BILL STORM: We're here all day.

22 MR. MARK WALSH: And I'm sure everybody
23 else has got questions, too.

24 I just wanted to make a comment about
25 when you made a mention of if you don't like the

1 looks of them, then your comment about that wouldn't
2 have much impact on it. But I guess you'd really
3 need to look at individuals and I'm sure there's
4 others like myself that have -- I recently retired
5 and to a place where we -- it goes back 50 years
6 when we bought the land. And through those 50 years
7 there's a lot of work and labor to make this land
8 retireable.

9 And once you get to that point, and then
10 they're going to put up these power lines next to
11 it, I think that should have some real impact
12 because it really impacts my life. So, yes, I will
13 put that in a comment on paper, but I think it has
14 just as much impact as any other concern.

15 MR. BILL STORM: Okay.

16 MR. MARK WALSH: Thank you.

17 MR. BILL STORM: You're more than
18 welcome.

19 Okay. Gentleman, please, with the hand
20 there, please come forward. State and spell your
21 name, talk -- face the court reporter as much as you
22 can do that.

23 MR. DAVE ROERICK: Thank you. My name is
24 Dave Roerick, spelled R-O-E-R-I-C-K. I live here in
25 Grand Rapids.

1 Just a simple question about compensation
2 of impacts. Specifically, it looks like I have some
3 acreage that is in the preferred corridor, and I've
4 had crossings in the past from pipelines and stuff
5 that there was no compensation. And in my case, I'm
6 a retired forester, and I have a love for trees and
7 timber, and there was no compensation involved. And
8 I'm wondering about compensation for timber that
9 would be harvested inside of that right-of-way.

10 MR. BILL STORM: Minnesota Power, do you
11 want to --

12 MR. JIM ATKINSON: Sure. Jim Atkinson
13 again.

14 We do pay for right-of-way, of course.
15 And that is a fee that's equivalent to the fee value
16 of the land. So we're paying as if we're buying it,
17 but we're not, of course, actually buying it, we're
18 just getting an easement. And typically we do pay
19 timber damages as well.

20 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you, Jim.

21 Okay. Show of hands?

22 Darrell, please come forward, state and
23 spell your name, try to face the court reporter.

24 MR. DARRELL WHITE: Darrell White,
25 D-A-R-R-E-L-L, White, W-H-I-T-E, Bovey. And, yes,

I have a couple concerns. I have a gas line already crossing my property. When Excelsior was going to come through, I don't know if they still are, they wanted to put another pipeline and a high-tension line across my property. And Nashwauk wanted to do the same. Now you're coming in. If all these projects come through, I only own 47 and a half acres, I won't have nothing. No woods, nothing left. And you want 200 and then another 50 feet for construction? It was in some of the paperwork we got.

And I'd like to see an eagle study done. Because at the end of 70 and 10, where 10 meets it, is a state park for eagles. And last winter, when I was shoveling off my roof, two eagles, treetop level, flew over. I don't know if it was their mating season or what, but they made a lot of noise. I'd like to see that done.

That's about all I have. Besides, it's

1 going to, like the one gentleman said, it's going to
2 impact my property a lot. I'm on the blue.

3 Do you want to answer anything? Yeah,
4 that's what I thought.

5 MR. JIM ATKINSON: I guess I could
6 respond to the compensation. Jim Atkinson.

7 The answer about compensation is that we
8 pay a one-time easement payment, which is the
9 equivalent of the fee value.

10 MR. DARRELL WHITE: Yeah, but we got to
11 live with this.

12 MR. JIM ATKINSON: That's right.

13 MS. CAROL OVERLAND: Buy the Farm.

14 MR. DARRELL WHITE: I've got to wait for
15 another year, more than a year to find out the
16 route?

17 MR. JIM ATKINSON: Yeah. To know for
18 certain, yes.

19 MR. DARRELL WHITE: Well, I want out.

20 MR. BILL STORM: Show of hands?

21 Carol, I imagine you're going to touch on
22 the Buy the Farm?

23 MS. CAROL OVERLAND: And a couple other
24 things.

25 MR. BILL STORM: Okay. Carol spoke once,

1 so if there's somebody who hasn't spoken, I'll let
2 them go first. I'll get to you Carol.

3 Okay, gentleman, please step forward,
4 state and spell your name.

5 MR. RON GUSTAFSON: Ron Gustafson,
6 G-U-S-T-A-F-S-O-N.

7 I have a question relative to existing
8 lines. Where the new line is proposed, will they
9 run parallel to each other? Will the old line be
10 removed or will there be a double power line in this
11 corridor? And, if so, does that expand the corridor
12 further and how much and what's the impact on that?

13 MR. JIM ATKINSON: Jim Atkinson.

14 The answer is that they would be
15 parallel. Two separate circuits on two different
16 sets of structures. And, yes, the right-of-way
17 would have to be extended substantially for that.

18 MR. BILL STORM: Jim, is there a
19 potential for a little bit of overlap so you don't
20 need the whole 200 feet?

21 MR. JIM ATKINSON: In some circumstances
22 there is. But we would still have to add
23 considerable width.

24 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you.

25 Carol, come forward.

1 MS. CAROL OVERLAND: Carol Overland
2 again. A number of things have been brought up that
3 I do have some answers about.

4 The utility personal property tax, that
5 is paid to the local governments and it is divided
6 pretty much evenly between the county, the city or
7 township, and the school district. So it does stay
8 in the area.

9 The difficulty with that is, is that our
10 friends at Xcel and other utilities have worked very
11 hard over the last -- well, since 1994, late '94
12 into '95, to cut utility personal property taxes in
13 every way possible. So it's way, way down from what
14 it used to be. Probably down at least like 50, 60
15 percent from what it was prior to those cuts. So
16 that's something that I think should be looked at as
17 an economic benefit. The economic benefit of those
18 utility personal property tax is not what it used to
19 be.

20 You also should know that in the
21 certificate of need there were questions about need
22 and that is -- there's an intervention deadline
23 coming up August 29th, that's in the certificate of
24 need docket, that is docket -- PUC docket 12-1163.

25 Let's see. In the need, typically, you

1 know, there's the need docket at the state and
2 there's the routing docket at the state. Typically
3 the only place alternatives are reviewed is in the
4 certificate of need docket, but here they're looking
5 at alternatives because NEPA requires it. The
6 question I have is, the NEPA alternatives that
7 you're looking at, will that just be like
8 alternative routes or will that be including system
9 alternatives?

10 DR. JULIE ANN SMITH: The way that the
11 NEPA process works is that we evaluate what we call
12 range of reasonable alternatives. This is defined
13 in law as a specific meaning. Whether or not an
14 alternative, whether it's a routing alternative or a
15 suggestion to look at other generation sources, that
16 would be considered in relation to what the purpose
17 and need from the federal decision is. So that
18 helps sort of define what that range of reasonable
19 alternatives are that would be carried forward for a
20 full detailed analysis in the document.

21 MS. CAROL OVERLAND: Okay. So then,
22 translated, that would mean it is more than just
23 routes?

24 DR. JULIE ANN SMITH: It could be, yes.

25 MS. CAROL OVERLAND: Okay. Great.

1 Thanks.

2 The next -- oh, and the timing of this
3 FEIS release, that's a question that I have.
4 Because we've had a problem, and an order just came
5 down in the docket for the ITC, which the PUC rep
6 Mike Kaluzniak, noticed just came down where I had
7 to make a motion to get the FEIS included -- the
8 time extended for people to comment on the FEIS, the
9 adequacy of it in the Minnesota process. So I'm
10 wondering if the FEIS will be released prior to
11 public hearings on this and the evidentiary hearing?
12 Do you know about scheduling?

13 MR. BILL STORM: We had a prehearing
14 conference with ALJ O'Reilly on Monday. And the way
15 we're approaching it, the way that the EERA always
16 approaches it is the final EIS will be submitted
17 into the record following the public hearing and
18 probably following the evidentiary hearing. The
19 hearing record is usually kept open for the
20 insertion of the final EIS. It is then up to the
21 intervenors and the parties, when they interact with
22 the ALJ at the prehearing conference, whether briefs
23 and reply briefs that follow the evidentiary
24 hearing, they can address the final EIS. But there
25 will not be a separate comment period on the final

1 EIS.

2 DR. JULIE ANN SMITH: And in the federal
3 process we don't have the ALJ proceeding that
4 follows. However, as I noted, you know, the draft
5 environmental impact statement can be released, we
6 often do get requests for extension of comment
7 periods for folks to review the document and submit
8 comments. We consider those and act accordingly,
9 typically allowing folks, because this is a public
10 process, to speak to that.

11 We on the federal side in our process, we
12 release the final EIS. And as I talked about in my
13 presentation a little bit, then there's a
14 cooling-off period for folks so that folks can look
15 at the final EIS, we do accept comments, and we
16 consider those when we are determining what we're
17 going to say in our decision document, which is the
18 record of decision. So there is a 30-day period.
19 There is an official request that would have to be
20 made because oftentimes we're not making that
21 decision determination on the 31st day. It depends
22 on the complexity. It also depends on various
23 factors.

24 Someone asked a question about
25 reliability, and I just want to quickly hone in on

1 this.

2 The Department of Energy, in determining
3 whether or not to issue a presidential permit, we
4 have various pieces of information. One of those
5 pieces, obviously, in the potential environmental
6 impacts from issuing that permit, and the
7 construction and operation of the line. But we also
8 must look at the electric reliability and the
9 impacts of this project on the grid and the
10 reliability of the grid. That is another piece of
11 information that also feeds into whether or not we
12 will issue this presidential permit.

13 MS. CAROL OVERLAND: So, then, on the
14 federal side there will be, then, a 30-day
15 opportunity at least to comment on the FEIS?

16 DR. JULIE ANN SMITH: Yes, ma'am.

17 MS. CAROL OVERLAND: Okay. Thank you.
18 That is not something the state is doing. But just
19 for the record, the state is updating the rules for
20 siting and certificate of need, and those do
21 contemplate in 7850 that the FEIS be issued prior to
22 the public hearings. And just for what that's
23 worth. And it's not -- won't affect this, but
24 that's common.

25 And as for the mailing address. It

1 sounds like maybe Minnesota Power has been using the
2 parties' address and not the land location, maybe,
3 for eliminating people from the list. So otherwise
4 I just don't see why, you know, Linda Castagneri and
5 Ron Gustafson wouldn't be on the list, and if they
6 were eliminated, who else was eliminated? That's
7 something that maybe you ought to take a look at.

8 MR. JIM ATKINSON: It's speculation, but
9 I think what probably happened is they were on a
10 previous list because we had broader corridors, and
11 when it was reduced down to our narrower routes they
12 were no longer within or adjacent. That's the
13 likely explanation.

14 DR. JULIE ANN SMITH: But following up on
15 that, please sign up on the mailing list related to
16 the EIS, both for state and the DOE, and you will
17 have access to receive timely information about the
18 project and about the environmental analysis. So
19 please fill out a card.

20 MS. CAROL OVERLAND: And another issue
21 that was raised is the people who have multiple
22 corridors. This is a 500 -- or any corridor, if
23 this is proposed on your land, this is a 500 kV line
24 and people are able to utilize Buy the Farm, which
25 is a statutory provision where people can say, look,

1 I don't want to live with this, I'm out of here.

2 Now, the problem is that the utilities
3 fight it. I don't know how Minnesota Power will
4 behave, Xcel has been fighting it at every turn and
5 we've had to even go to the Supreme Court about
6 this. Landowners are winning, but. So it remains
7 to be seen how, you know, Minnesota Power will deal
8 with that. But that is an option under the statute,
9 to say you have to buy me out, I do not want to live
10 with this. And then what happens is it ends up
11 being a fight over how much it's worth, but that is
12 an option that Minnesota does have and other states
13 don't have.

14 And something that the EIS, I'm wondering
15 if it does address, too, as far as waiting to know.
16 You know, there's an issue of loss of marketability
17 here, where people who are faced with this project,
18 you can't very well sell because nobody is going to
19 want to buy it if they don't know if there's going
20 to be a transmission line here or not, and that's a
21 problem. And that's an economic impact, it does
22 affect people. So that's something that should be
23 considered in the EIS.

24 And that's it for now. Thank you.

25 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you, Carol.

1 Okay. Back to the pool. Show of hands?

2 Yes, sir, please come forward, state and
3 spell your name, face the court reporter.

4 MR. HARVEY WAHLQUIST: Harvey Wahlquist,
5 W-A-H-L-Q-U-I-S-T.

6 I'm not an opponent of progress, I think
7 it's a great thing, what our country is founded on.

8 I've got a comment about the substation.
9 I'm going to be your neighbor at that substation.
10 How big is it going to be?

11 MR. JIM ATKINSON: I believe that the
12 footprint is going to be probably, the fenced-in
13 area would be at least ten acres.

14 MR. HARVEY WAHLQUIST: Okay. How much
15 noise is it going to make?

16 MR. JIM ATKINSON: We do address that in
17 the route permit. I don't have the figures in front
18 of me, but at the distance that the neighbors are
19 from that site, I don't believe it'll be audible
20 from any of them.

21 DR. JULIE ANN SMITH: If I may also
22 address that. However, noise is an impact, it is a
23 resource impact that we do cover in the EIS, both
24 from construction and from operation of the line.

25 MR. HARVEY WAHLQUIST: The reason I ask

1 is because I can hear the substation that's there
2 quite well already. And I'm told that this is going
3 to be substantially more noise than what's there
4 now.

5 MR. JIM ATKINSON: Well, I don't know if
6 it'll be more noise than what's there now, but it
7 will be a substantially larger substation.

8 MR. HARVEY WAHLQUIST: One other question
9 here.

10 On the trees, the existing trees that are
11 there. The proposal that I read, the blue route is
12 going to take half of the 40 acres that I own there,
13 the orange route will take all of the 40 acres that
14 I own there. I don't understand the 200-foot
15 easement.

16 My question is my trees are probably 25
17 to 30 feet tall now, I planted 'em about 12, 13
18 years ago, 14,000 pine trees I've got. How tall can
19 they be before they have to be -- or will they
20 affect the power line right-of-way if they all have
21 to go. Thank you.

22 MR. JIM ATKINSON: Within the power line
23 right-of-way we wouldn't leave anything that was 25
24 feet tall. 15 feet is about as high as anything
25 could be. So the answer is everything would be

1 cleared within the 200-foot right-of-way.

2 And the difference between the route, of
3 course, and the right-of-way, is that the route is
4 an area that would be permitted to play host to a
5 right-of-way, but the -- and so it's a lot wider
6 than what the actual right-of-way would need to be.

7 MR. BILL STORM: Okay. Anybody else?
8 Questions?

9 Richard. Please step forward, state and
10 spell your name again. Please keep the mic close to
11 your mouth and look at the court reporter.

12 MR. RICHARD LIBBEY: Richard Libbey,
13 R-I-C-H-A-R-D, L-I-B-B-E-Y.

14 I'd like to preface my remark saying I
15 think we're fortunate to have Minnesota Power as our
16 utility up here. They've always been a very
17 responsible corporate neighbor and really look out
18 for the area for us, I think. And Jim's been good
19 to work with.

20 But on the compensation issue, Jim said
21 that they'd pay fee title for the 200-foot strip
22 that crosses your property. I'm wondering if they
23 pay for the overall reduction in your property
24 value. Because if you have a 40-acre piece that,
25 say, is worth \$100,000 and they cross \$1,000 worth

1 of acreage, if someone buys the property, comes and
2 says, well, you've got a big power line across
3 there, I'll give you 60,000 for it. So I'm
4 wondering in the compensation procedure, are they
5 compensated just for the land that's impacted or do
6 they compensate for resale value of the property?

7 Also, when the line is there, there's
8 going to be maintenance going on, there's going to
9 be herbicide application or else mechanical
10 clearing, and there are going to be helicopter
11 overflights to inspect the lines. And it's one
12 issue, if they're paralleling another line, you
13 think it would be more economical for them to
14 parallel a line for maintenance reasons because you
15 could do -- coordinate helicopter flights, even
16 though different utilities own the lines. You could
17 also coordinate your herbicide applications and line
18 clearing.

19 And there was a question about how much
20 of the lines are paralleled earlier. And I
21 mentioned it earlier, but for clarification, when
22 the two proposals, one, 30 percent of the lines are
23 paralleled and on the other proposal only 38
24 percent, so about a third of the proposed route
25 follows existing transmission lines.

1 Another point, in Itasca County I know
2 it's a concern of the Itasca County, is that the
3 proposed routes go right on the boundary of the Bass
4 Lake County Park that's up by Bigfork, up by Effie.
5 And if there's some way to work around that, I think
6 it should be looked into. I know if they follow the
7 existing corridor to the right it will be a moot
8 point because it will bypass, you know, it won't be
9 near the park anymore. So that's an issue of
10 concern.

11 And also on the two, you know, proposed
12 routes, the minerals expressed concern because it
13 crosses Township 624 and 623 that are being actively
14 explored for copper/nickel deposits. And I think
15 that's another thing that should be considered.

16 And a question for Jim on the three types
17 of structures that they're proposing. One is a
18 freestanding one. These are similar to the ones you
19 see if you go across the Big Bog on the way to
20 Duluth there. It looks like a big scarecrow
21 standing up with big arms going out, they're 140
22 feet high and, you know, really large power lines.
23 But I'm wondering if there's one that's freestanding
24 that wouldn't impact the avian birds as much, an owl
25 flying through the night to catch a mouse, you've

1 got guy wires going down, it's less likely to hit a
2 guy wire than a freestanding tower. I believe when
3 they build in softer bog type areas I think they
4 have to use the guy types, there's two of them
5 illustrated there.

6 When you do build these, I'm wondering
7 how they build it like in big bogs, way north here.
8 I talked to a retired DNR person, and he said he was
9 there when they built the existing line back in the
10 '80s, I think it was. He said they had to do soil
11 borings and they hit 14 feet of bog before they hit
12 the ground. He said it was quite a procedure to
13 build across, they were flying helicopters in with
14 concrete buckets, pouring the footings and bringing
15 the towers in. I'm just wondering exactly how you
16 construct it and if you take into consideration bird
17 impacts, you know, which type of tower you can get
18 by with without impacting the wildlife so much.

19 And let's see. Oh, another thing that
20 hasn't been mentioned is this is a cooperative
21 ownership agreement with Manitoba Hydro. It's got a
22 capability of carrying 750 megawatts. Minnesota
23 Power has contracted for 250. Manitoba Hydro is the
24 junior partner in the project, they're paying 49
25 percent of the construction costs, Minnesota Power

1 is paying 51. So the line has to be run longer, if
2 there is more expenses to acquiring property, I
3 think it should be kept in mind that it won't be
4 entirely put on the backs of Minnesota ratepayers,
5 that Manitoba Hydro will be sharing the load. So
6 that might lighten the arguments about increased
7 costs for different parts of the line.

8 And like Carol pointed out, a lot of the
9 power is going to be pass-through power. And the
10 lines impact mostly Lake Country Power customers,
11 they don't receive the power from Minnesota Power,
12 so basically the landowners on the route are
13 carrying the burden of the project and other people
14 are benefiting.

15 Okay. Thanks.

16 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you, Richard. Any
17 comment?

18 MR. JIM ATKINSON: No.

19 MR. BILL STORM: Okay. Back to the pool
20 again.

21 Darrell, please come forward.

22 MR. DARRELL WHITE: I just forgot one
23 thing. You don't have to run back, I got a loud
24 voice.

25 Like I said earlier, I have a gas line

1 running through my property. I have trouble with
2 people coming in there bird hunting, deer hunting,
3 snowmobiling, four-wheeling. How am I going to keep
4 them out?

5 MR. JIM ATKINSON: Jim Atkinson again.

6 That's a concern a lot of landowners
7 have, and we do work with landowners on gates and
8 that sort of thing, so there's often ways that that
9 can be restricted.

10 MR. BILL STORM: Okay. The pool again?
11 Anyone? Anyone have additional comments? Have
12 questions?

13 I want to remind you that in the back my
14 man, G, has the GIS station set up. If you want to
15 call up an aerial photo of your property and on the
16 back of that you can make comments if you have a
17 concern. If you want G to help you come up with a
18 route or possible route alternatives, I encourage
19 you to do that.

20 I want to let you know that many people
21 have made comments that push it to the east, put it
22 to the west. If you want to put an alternative on
23 the table, you need to work with me, work with G
24 within the comment period and hammer out a defined
25 alternative route segment that you would like me to

1 consider.

2 When I get general comments, push it to
3 the east, or push it to the west or to the north or
4 the south, there's not much I can really do for that
5 because that puts me in the position of developing a
6 route for you, and that's a lose, lose for me. I'm
7 not going to do it right for some reason.

8 But what I would be willing to do is to
9 sit down, come up here, meet with you. You can
10 certainly work with G. And we can help you work out
11 something reasonable to get around whatever area and
12 concerns you have to get around.

13 I'm going to go back to again to the
14 pool. A question? Anybody? A question, comment?

15 MR. BOB WALSH: I just had --

16 MR. BILL STORM: Please stand up, state
17 and spell your name.

18 MR. BOB WALSH: Bob Walsh, W-A-L-S-H.

19 How many power lines are now existing
20 that come across our borders?

21 MR. BILL STORM: Just Minnesota?

22 MR. BOB WALSH: Minnesota, yes.

23 MR. JIM ATKINSON: The answer is there's
24 currently a 230 kV, one of those, and one 500 kV
25 line.

1 MR. BOB WALSH: So there are two other
2 lines that come across already.

3 MR. JIM ATKINSON: Right.

4 MR. BOB WALSH: And they can't use those
5 existing lines to come across and --

6 MR. JIM ATKINSON: No, those are at
7 capacity.

8 MR. BOB WALSH: At capacity, meaning the
9 wires are at capacity, but not the routes. I mean,
10 you could widen one of those 100 foot and come
11 through there with different lines, additional
12 lines?

13 MR. JIM ATKINSON: Yeah. I mean, we are
14 following those same circuits in different places.
15 And some places we're not for various reasons.

16 MR. BOB WALSH: One other question is,
17 again, I'm not a power individual, so why do these
18 towers need to be so tall?

19 MR. JIM ATKINSON: Because you have to
20 maintain minimum clearances at the midpoint.

21 MR. BOB WALSH: And why is that?

22 MR. JIM ATKINSON: That's roughly 40
23 feet.

24 MR. BOB WALSH: And why is that?

25 MR. JIM ATKINSON: Because it's a high

1 voltage transmission line.

2 DR. JULIE ANN SMITH: And there are
3 height clearance requirements that are required.

4 MR. BILL STORM: Electrical code.

5 DR. JULIE ANN SMITH: I'm sorry?

6 MR. BILL STORM: Electrical code.

7 DR. JULIE ANN SMITH: Exactly, electrical
8 code, and it's based on reliability.

9 MR. BOB WALSH: So these are at, did you
10 say, 75 feet, or 130?

11 MR. JIM ATKINSON: No, these would
12 probably average 140 feet tall.

13 MR. BOB WALSH: 140 feet.

14 MR. JIM ATKINSON: Right.

15 MR. BOB WALSH: And then I guess I just
16 don't get, they need to be 140 feet from the ground.

17 MR. JIM ATKINSON: It's not 140, it's at
18 the midpoint where you have the sag in the line.
19 It's down to about 40 feet or 41 feet, something
20 like that.

21 MR. BOB WALSH: I see. Thank you.

22 MR. JIM ATKINSON: Yep.

23 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you.

24 Back to -- please stand, state your name,
25 if you want to speak.

1 MR. CAVOUR JOHNSON: I just had -- Cavour
2 Johnson. I just had one other question.

3 Through Itasca County there's two routes,
4 the preferred and the alternative. Is there a
5 chance that those would ever be -- and they cross
6 each other. Is there ever a chance that one portion
7 of one would be used and a portion of the other in
8 this process?

9 MR. BILL STORM: That is certainly a
10 possibility. And when the Commission gets to their
11 final decision point and they're looking at the
12 whole record, the EIS, the public hearing, the
13 evidentiary hearing, all the comments we receive,
14 they could very well pick a route that follows the
15 blue route for so many miles and where it intersects
16 with the orange, pick up the orange, and then when
17 it intersects with the blue, go back to the blue. I
18 mean, they're going to balance all these portions of
19 the line as well as taken as a whole. So that could
20 be a possibility.

21 MR. CAVOUR JOHNSON: Okay.

22 MR. BILL STORM: Okay. Back to the pool
23 again.

24 Yes, Richard, you want another shot?
25 Okay. Please state and spell your name and speak

1 loudly.

2 MR. RICHARD LIBBEY: Okay. It'll just
3 take me one second. Richard Libbey, R-I-C-H-A-R-D,
4 L-I-B-B-E-Y.

5 I do have a map here of the existing
6 power lines if anybody wants to look at a map after
7 the meeting concludes.

8 MR. BILL STORM: Okay. And I do believe,
9 G, you could call up, when people come up to you to
10 the back and the computer, you can lay on
11 transmission lines, SNAs, whatever they want. So
12 please utilize G, he'll be here all day.

13 Okay. Another --

14 MR. RICHARD LIBBEY: I was just going to
15 say, this map was added as an attachment to
16 Minnesota Power's application, so it is online also.

17 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you, Richard.

18 Once again, back to the pool. I really
19 encourage you, I'm not making fun of you, I want
20 your comments. Any comment? Any more comments?

21 Okay. Remember August 15th. You have my
22 contact information, so if you're struggling with --
23 and if you made oral comments tonight, you can
24 certainly follow up with written comments. If
25 you're struggling at some point to how do I

1 formulate this comment, Bill, or help me work this
2 out, give me a call, I'll work you through it.

3 And the same thing goes with routes, if
4 you've got an issue that you want to try to avoid, G
5 will certainly work with you back there, but as we
6 approach the comment period I will also give you any
7 assistance that I can and walk you through it.

8 I'm going to come back to the pool for
9 going once, twice.

10 Okay. I really appreciate you coming
11 out. This is what this process is all about. I do
12 get a lot of local knowledge from, as you can see
13 when I went through my alternatives, and what the
14 Commission has done with things that come up through
15 scoping, it does have a positive effect. So, please
16 participate, remember the comment period. I want to
17 thank you for coming out. Please utilize G as much
18 as you can stand, and thank you.

19 (Meeting concluded at 1:04 p.m.)
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